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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 000604

SIPDIS
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EO 12958 DECL: 03/09/2019
TAGS PGOV, PREL, ECON, PINR, UK
SUBJECT: LIBERAL DEMOCRATS LOOK AHEAD TO THEIR ELECTION
STRATEGY, POSSIBLE COALITION PARTICIPATION, AND OFFER THOUGHTS ON U.S.-UK RELATIONS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Greg Berry, reasons 1.4 (b/ d).

1. (C/NF) Summary and comment: Emboffs attending the Liberal Democrats' (Lib Dems) Spring Conference heard much in corridor conversations about
- The Coalition Calculus - Labour is "competition," but the Conservatives are "opposition:" Most Lib Dems are instinctively hostile to the Cons
- Amplify Cable's Voice on the Economy: Party members are pleased Lib Dem Deputy Vince Cable has become a national voice on the economic downturn
- The Death of Cameron's Son Changes Election Strategy: The Lib Dem counter-Conservative strategy in the next election was to attack Tory leadership
On UK-U.S. relations, the Lib Dems welcome the USG's recent "constructive engagement" with Russia, Iran, and Syria. Several party members saw a

2. (C/NF) Summary and comment con't. Although the Lib Dems do not have an electoral issue that can strongly define them as a Party for UK vote
Coalition Calculus: Labour is Competition, Conservatives are Opposition

3. (C/NF) The Lib Dems' agenda-light, March 7-8 Spring Conference in Harrogate garnered a brief up-tick in national media coverage for the party
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voters have significantly reduced its number of seats - is "political suicide," especially since the Lib Dems' main campaign message is a call

And Our Leaders Just Don't Get Along

4. (C/NF) Lamb said that Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg and Tory chief David Cameron do not get along personally. Lamb said Clegg thinks Cameron is
Upgrading Cable

5. (C/NF) Chief Economic Advisor and Speech Writer Chris Saunders told us that Lib Dem Deputy leader Vince Cable has become a national voice calling
A New Strategy Is Required to Attack Cameron

6. (C/NF) Both Saunders and Nick Clegg's Speechwriter and Policy Manager Polly Mackenzie said that Cameron's clear vulnerability was the public
U.S. - UK Relations

7. (C/NF) Lib Dem Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Ed Davey, his Deputy Jo Swinson, and Development Spokesperson Michael Moore all welcomed the US

8. (C/NF) Moore said the USG's decision to host Prime Minister Gordon Brown as the first European leader in Washington was a way "to let the (UK)
Focused on Domestic Issues, but No Clear Message Yet

9. (C/NF) With UK voters' focusing on education, health care, and the UK's sharp economic downturn, the focus of this year's conference was on
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Labour's foreign policy on Iraq and involvement in the rendition of terror suspects. Party leader Clegg's main speech closing the conference at
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